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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 05/01/09

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ARTICLES:

(1) Poll on Aso cabinet, political parties

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
April 30, 2009

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote the results of the
last survey conducted March 25-26.)

Q: Do you support the Aso cabinet?

Yes 29.6 (23.7)

No 56.2 (63.5)

Don't know (D/K) + no answer (N/A) 14.2 (12.8)

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the previous question)

What's the primary reason for your approval of the Aso cabinet? Pick
only one from among those listed below.

The prime minister is trustworthy 13.3 (9.1)

Because it's a coalition cabinet of the Liberal Democratic Party and
the New Komeito 10.7 (11.4)

The prime minister has leadership ability 4.7 (0.6)

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Something can be expected of its economic policies 15.0 (6.6)

Something can be expected of its foreign policies 5.1 (7.2)

Something can be expected of its political reforms 1.3 (2.6)

Something can be expected of its tax reforms 1.3 (2.1)

Something can be expected of its administrative reforms 0.6 (2.6)

There's no other appropriate person (for prime minister) 45.3
(55.9)

Other answers (O/A) 1.2 (---)

D/K+N/A 1.5 (1.9)

Q: (Only for those who answered "no" to the first question) What's
the primary reason for your disapproval of the Aso cabinet? Pick
only one from among those listed below.

The prime minister is untrustworthy 12.8 (17.0)

Because it's a coalition cabinet of the Liberal Democratic Party and
the New Komeito 7.7 (4.9)

The prime minister lacks leadership ability 15.3 (19.2)

Nothing can be expected of its economic policies 28.7 (29.5)

Nothing can be expected of its foreign policies 2.5 (0.6)

Nothing can be expected of its political reforms 11.8 (8.2)

Nothing can be expected of its tax reforms 3.7 (2.8)

Nothing can be expected of its administrative reforms 6.3 (7.2)

Don't like the prime minister's personal character 9.3 (8.9)

O/A 0.5 (0.9)

D/K+N/A 1.4 (0.8)

Q: The government has presented the Diet with a fiscal 2009
supplementary budget to the extent of 15 trillion yen as an economic
crisis measure. What do you think about the government's additional
economic package?

Appreciate very much 5.0

Appreciate to a certain extent 33.6

Don't appreciate very much 41.2

Don't appreciate at all 13.8

D/K+N/A 6.4

Q: DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa continues to be his party's head after
his state-funded secretary has been indicted on the charge of
violating the Political Funds Control Law. What do you think about
this?

He can continue 28.2 (28.9)

He should resign 65.5 (66.6)
D/K+N/A 6.3 (4.5)

Q: Politicians' children become politicians by taking over their parents' home constituencies. This time-honored politics of inheritance is now being discussed among various political parties. Do you think there is a problem with this type of hereditary politics?

Yes 61.2
No 32.6
D/K+N/A 6.2

Q: The House of Representatives' current term expires in September of this year. When would you like the House of Representatives to be dissolved for a general election?

At the earliest possible time before the supplementary budget's

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passage through the Diet 27.6
After the supplementary budget's passage through the Diet 24.7
In mid-July or later, after the G-8 summit 15.0
Wait until the current term expires (in September) without dissolving the Diet 24.0
D/K+N/A 8.7

Q: Would you like the present LDP-led coalition government to continue, would you like it to be replaced with a DPJ-led coalition government, or would you like the LDP and the DPJ to form a coalition government?

LDP-led coalition government 21.9
DPJ-led coalition government 35.9
LDP-DPJ grand coalition 31.9
D/K+N/A 10.3

Q: Which political party are you going to vote for in the next House of Representatives election in your proportional representation bloc?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 30.8 (30.5)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 37.9 (34.1)
New Komeito (NK) 4.3 (3.1)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 3.5 (1.9)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 2.3 (1.8)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0.2 (0.6)
Reform Club (RC or Kaikaku Kurabu) 0.1 (---)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0.2 (---)
Other political parties, groups --- (---)
D/K+N/A 20.7 (28.0)

Q: When comparing Prime Minister Taro Aso and DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa, which one do you think is more appropriate for prime minister?

Taro Aso 39.8 (33.1)
Ichiro Ozawa 26.1 (31.2)
D/K+N/A 34.1 (35.7)

Q: Which political party do you support?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 29.4 (29.7)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 29.7 (28.4)
New Komeito (NK) 3.9 (2.7)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2.8 (1.5)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1.4 (2.2)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0.3 (0.9)
Reform Club (RC or Kaikaku Kurabu) --- (0.2)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0.3 (0.1)
Other political parties, groups --- (---)
None 30.8 (32.1)
D/K+N/A 1.4 (2.2)

Polling methodology: This survey was conducted nationwide on April 28-29 by Kyodo News Service on a computer-aided random digit dialing

(RDD) basis. Among randomly generated telephone numbers, those actually for household use with one or more eligible voters totaled 1,463. Answers were obtained from 1,014 persons.

(2) Japan, China enjoying honeymoon-like relationship, while thorny issue remains unsolved

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ASAHI (Page 3) (Abridged slightly)
April 30, 2009

Toru Higashioka, Kengo Sakajiri

(Prime Minister Aso and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on April 29 met in Beijing.) The meeting was Aso's sixth summit since taking office last fall. Talks between the leaders of Japan and China have become a regular function since then Prime Minister Abe in the fall of 2006 reached agreement with President Hu Jintao on the building of a mutually beneficial strategic relationship. The bilateral relations are now enjoying smooth sailing. However, a thorny issue still remains to be solved involving Japan's past history. The true worth of the bilateral relationship, such as how to respond to North Korea and measures to combat global warming, remains untested.

Focus on major issues

Wen at the outset of the talks said: "China's relationship with Japan is one of our most important bilateral relations. Our ties have improved through mutual efforts and accomplishments. Our two countries should value and maintain their relationship." Aso responded: "This is my third meeting with Chinese leaders in a month - the first with President Hu in London, the second with Premier Wen in Pattaya and the third with you here."

Since the normalization of bilateral ties, there have never been three summits in a month. Mutual visits by leaders of both countries took place five times last year. This is the most frequent ever. Japan-China relations were once termed "seirei-keinetsu," meaning their relations had been cold politically due to former Prime Minister Koizumi's Yasukuni Shrine visits but hot economically. However, Abe reset ties into a mutually beneficial strategic relationship. Since then the relations of the two countries have been proceeding stably.

A government source revealed that Chinese leaders in their summit meetings insisted on discussing a major framework of how the two biggest powers in Asia should deal with the financial crisis. Their aim was to prevent bilateral pending issues, such as the Chinese-made frozen gyoza poisoning incident, whose settlement is nowhere in sight, and the development of gas fields in the East China Sea, from coming into focus at the talks.

With a general election in Japan close at hand, the Chinese side also gave consideration to the Aso administration. A Chinese Communist Party source said: "If we bring up sensitive issues, the prime minister would have no choice but to take a hard-line stance with the domestic audience in mind. We cannot possibly focus on such issues."

Wen cut to the core of the Yasukuni Shrine issue, although the Chinese Foreign Ministry had simply expressed dissatisfaction until the eve of the talks. He called on Aso to handle the issue properly, noting, "We must head toward the future, learning a lesson from the history. The Yasukuni Shrine issue concerns our national sentiments." This statement was apparently meant to tacitly criticize Aso for making an offering to the shrine, which was revealed on the 21st.

The history issue is a delicate issue, which could shake the

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stabilization of society, a top priority issue for Beijing. Wen at the summit drove the point home to Aso with the public in mind.

That is because if they take it that their government indicated a flexible stance to Japan over the history issue, they would criticize the leadership, as a diplomatic source in Beijing said.

No path to solve pending issues in sight

Both Aso and Wen underscored the closeness of the bilateral relationship. However, when it came to specific pending issues, no progress was made.

The joint development of gas fields in the East China Sea, which the two countries agreed upon in June last year, is drawing attention as a symbol of the two countries' mutually beneficial strategic relationship. Aso called for entering into talks to sign an agreement at an early date, noting, "I would like Premier Wen to deal with the matter, displaying leadership." Wen simply stated, "I would like to have working-level officials continue to discuss the matter."

Views of Japan and China on such issues as North Korea, disarmament and measures to combat global warming, which require multilateral talks, also differ. Amid such a situation, relations between Washington and Beijing are a matter of concern to .

China drew attention at the financial summit held in London in early April, because it put up a target of achieving annual growth of about 8 PERCENT . U.S. President Obama during talks with Hu said, "The U.S.-China relations are most important bilateral relations." Now the U.S. and China are termed "G-2."

The Foreign Ministry before Aso's visit to China compiled data indicating that while Japan-China summit took place 13 times from January 2007 through April this year, U.S.-China talks were held only five times. A related source in the ministry said, "Relations between Japan and the China are closer than relations between the U.S. and China."

However, Japan was buffeted between the U.S. and China at UN Security Council talks following North Korea's ballistic missile launch.

The U.S. secretly got in touch with China. As a result of a compromise reached between the two countries, a chairman's statement instead of a resolution was adopted at the conference. Some Japanese government expressed dissatisfaction with China's move, saying, "The mutually beneficial strategic relationship is not just a play on words."

(3) Unexpected criticism of Aso's offering to Yasukuni Shrine shows fragility of Japan-China relations

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
May 1, 2009

Takaharu Watanabe

Prime Minister Taro Aso was criticized at the latest meetings with Chinese leaders for his offering to Yasukuni Shrine. The government had anticipated that the Chinese side would not take Aso's action seriously. Although the two countries seem to be steadily

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establishing a strategic mutually-beneficial relationship, the summit meetings exposed the fragility of Japan-China relations, with the Yasukuni issue as a thorny bilateral issue.

At the outset of the meeting with Aso, Premier Wen Jiabao said: "The two governments, particularly politicians, should try to dispose of (the issue) cautiously and properly, based on the spirit expressed in four political documents signed between China and Japan." Hearing this remark, Aso looked puzzled.

Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited Yasukuni Shrine every year from 2002 to 2006. China slammed the visits, focusing on the point that Yasukuni enshrines the souls of Class-A criminals. As a result, Japan-China relations became strained. Prime Minister

Shinzo Abe (Koizumi's successor) tried to improve the strained bilateral ties with the strategy of not making any reference to whether he planned to visit the shrine. His successor, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, clearly said that he would not pay homage at the shrine.

Prime Minister Aso has followed Abe's strategy, but he announced that he sent an offering to Yasukuni Shrine, with an eye on gaining votes from conservatives in the next House of Representatives election. China's criticism seemed to surprise Aso, who considered his offering to be within the acceptable range. When told by Wen and President Hu Jintao that Japan should deal with the history issue properly," Aso, somewhat upset, replied: "Japan's historical view remains unchanged."

The government has made efforts to reconstruct relations with China since the days of the Abe administration. In 2008, five reciprocal visits were made by the Japanese and Chinese leaders, including the Japanese prime minister's visit to China to attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games.

This year, Japan and China have already held three rounds of bilateral summit meetings. The Aso-Wen meeting on the 29th was unprecedentedly long, lasting for two hours and 20 minutes, during which both leaders agreed to implement a comprehensive cooperation plan on environmental protection and energy conservation and to operate regular chartered flights between Beijing and Haneda Airport. Aso proudly said in a press conference held after the meeting: "We confirmed that the both countries should try to promote the strategic mutually-beneficial relationship."

With respect to the Yasukuni issue, however, no major progress has been made. In 2002, a private panel to then Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda put together a report calling for a national nonreligious permanent facility. But this proposal has been left in limbo.

The Foreign Minister Aso came up with his private plan in 2006 that proposed Yasukuni Shrine be stripped of its religious status and turned into a state-run war memorial as a measure to pave the way for separate enshrinement of the Class-A war criminals. On this plan, too, no progress has been made.

Aso intends to avoid a Yasukuni visit (on Aug. 15), so China's criticism in the latest bilateral summit meetings is unlikely to deteriorate relations between Japan and China. Still, a number of thorny issues that could worsen bilateral ties have been left unresolved between the two countries, including the problem of poisoned dumplings made in China, gas field development in the East

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China Sea, and sovereignty the Senkaku Islands (the Diaoyutai Islands in Chinese)

(4) Editorial: IT friction; Dazzle and threat of China's market force

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
May 1, 2009

Prime Minister Aso made his first official visit to China, where he met with Premier Wen Jiabao. Their meeting lasted far longer than planned -- two hours and 20 minutes. There are numerous challenges to be tackled between the two countries, including the global economic crisis, the new-type influenza, and North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

The main theme of the talks was building a mutually beneficial strategic relationship. However, unreasonable issues also were brought up.

For instance, the agenda items included the issue of a China Compulsory Certification (CCC) system intended to obligate companies manufacturing or selling IT security products in China to disclose technical information. Thirteen items, such as IC card readers, are subject to this system.

Chances are high that disclosing the design of software called "source code" will be required in order for companies to obtain this certification. Source code software is very important intellectual property for companies, as can be seen in the fact that Microsoft categorizes the source code of its operating system (OS) as classified information.

China explained that the system is aimed at preventing the intrusion of computer viruses. It claims that the CCC has already been in place targeting home electronic appliances and PCs since 2002, and it just plans to add some more items to the list.

However, no other countries are adopting such a system for information security products. It is only natural that Prime Minister Aso asked China to shelve the plan, calling it a trade barrier.

Products subject to the regulation cannot be sold in China without the certification. The sales amount of Japanese products subject to the regulation is estimated to reach to 1 trillion yen. If such a regulation is put into force, its impact would be immense.

European countries and the U.S. are strongly opposing China's plan. The Chinese government has, therefore, decided to put off the implementation of the system until May next year and limit products subject to it to those to be procured by the government.

There are many state-run companies in China. Prime Minister Aso's point that the range of government procurement in China is broad is agreeable. The Japanese government should ask China to reconsider the matter in cooperation with European countries and the U.S.

Behind China's bullish stance is probably its awareness that it is probably the one and only growth market in the world, when the world is gripped by an economic crisis.

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While various industrialized countries are suffering from negative growth, China is about to become the second largest economic power after the U.S., surpassing Japan. Its defense expenses have already topped Japan's.

Soon after French President Sarkozy met with Dalai Lama XIV, the supreme leader of Tibetan Buddhism, China tried to thoroughly leave France out in economic terms. In the end, France and China decided in the form of France succumbing to China to release a joint statement, which went that that they would not support the independence of Tibet.

The power relationship between Japan and China is undergoing a sea change. China will probably make strong move. Japan will find it ever more necessary to pursue diplomacy of making preemptive moves in international cooperation, by thinking ahead, instead of remaining passive.

(5) Editorial: Superficial strategic mutual-beneficial relationship

YOMIURI (Page 3) (Full)
May 1, 2009

Despite that the Japanese and Chinese leaders have frequently met, the number of pending issues and the significance of them have increasingly grown. The two countries should not make light of the "strategic mutually-beneficial relationship. "

Prime Minister Taro Aso made an official visit to China. He held talks with Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao. For Aso, this was the fourth meeting, including ones in international conferences, with the Chinese leaders. It seems that dialogues between the leaders of Japan and China have carried out smoothly since last fall.

However, the question is whether concrete progress appropriate to the mutual-beneficial relationship was made.

The Japanese and Chinese leaders confirmed that the two countries would cooperate to deal with the current global crisis such as the new-type influenza, the global economic recession, and North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

In particular, the leaders agreed to respond calmly to North Korea, which launched a long-range ballistic missile under the guise of launching a satellite into space. They also agreed to urge the North to abandon nuclear weapons through the six-party talks.

However, North Korea asserted that it will never participate in the six-party talks, and resumed the reprocessing of spent fuel rods. The North even announced that it will conduct nuclear test. The question is how Japan and China will persuade such a North Korea.

It is said that China remains pessimistic about imposing economic sanctions on North Korea.

Prime Minister Aso should strongly urge China to steadily implement freezes on the assets of North Korean companies that the United Nations Security Council designated, as well as the use of its influence over Pyongyang.

Regarding the economic crisis, the Japanese and Chinese leaders also

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agreed to expand domestic demand and oppose protectionism.

However, the Chinese government announced that it would introduce in May next year a new regulation forcing makers to disclose key software information of information technology (IT) products.

Foreign companies are concerned about the leakage of secret information. The application of such a regulation will have an enormous impact on tread between Japan and China. Aso must demand that China remove the regulation.

The leaders were unable to resolve bilateral pending issues.

Aso sought an early start of substantive negotiations on the dispute over exploration rights in the East China gas fields. However, there was no progress.

Aso also called on Wen for China's cooperation on nuclear disarmament, but Wen reiterated: "China has consistently advocated the need for total ban on nuclear arms." The Chinese government should take honestly the concerns about China's military buildup, including nuclear weapons.

Wen said: "The Yasukuni issue is closely associated with our national sentiments." If he made the remark with Aso's offering of a gift to Yasukuni Shrine in mind, he was overreacting.

In many polls, Japanese sentiments toward China have recently deteriorated. The biggest reason seems to be that China has not resolved the issue of poisoned frozen dumplings. China must solve this issue as quickly as possible.

(6) 'Offshore' relocation to be coordinated behind the scenes

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 3) (Full)
May 1, 2009

Ikue Nakaima

The realignment of U.S. forces in Japan is only increasing the local burdens and building up the military bases. The government, exploring ways to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station as planned, is now beginning to show consideration unlike before for requests from the governor of Okinawa Prefecture and the heads of base-hosting municipalities in the prefecture. Kadena Town and its environs, suffering from Kadena Air Base's aircraft noise, are only feeling burdened even more heavily. On the other hand, there are also views pointing out changes in the security environment of Japan. The U.S. force realignment is now being called into question again.

The planned relocation of Futenma airfield (to a coastal area of Camp Schwab in Nago City's Henoko district) is a 'showcase' to mitigate the burden of base-hosting localities in Okinawa Prefecture. In February, Japan and the United States signed an intergovernmental agreement to move Okinawa-based U.S. Marines to Guam, incorporating the relocation of Futenma airfield in the prefecture. In April, the government sent in a preliminary report to Okinawa Prefecture on its plan to construct an alternative facility and its assessment of a potential impact on the environment of the newly planned facility. In this report, the government says it will also look into the feasibility of moving the construction site to an

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offshore area. As seen from such moves, the government is now making preparations in a steady way to implement the Futenma relocation plan. The government is giving way to Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima. Meanwhile, the governor is expected to come up with his opinion in October on the preliminary report. The government will likely activate behind-the-scenes coordination to reach a final settlement with the prefecture over its proposal of offshore relocation.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives' current membership is to expire in September. The next general election could result in a change of government. Ichiro Ozawa, president of the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), will clarify his standpoint against the planned relocation of Futenma airfield to Nago City's Henoko district, aiming to make it a campaign issue. Depending on the outcome of the election, Futenma relocation will likely enter a new phase.

The government's preliminary report, which concluded that the government plan is "optimum," adds the governor's proposal of offshore relocation for consideration. In April, the government held a ninth consultative meeting with Okinawa's prefectural and municipal government officials to discuss Futenma relocation. In that meeting, Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura showed consideration for the local requests and left room for offshore relocation.

The alternative facility will also have a helipad. Concerning this new helipad's installation, Nago City has been calling for its location to be changed, and the government is also considering the city's request. The alternative facility is to be completed by 2014. The government, which sets store on this time limit, is also giving way to the city in consideration of its request.

Camp Schwab in the city of Nago has billets and some other facilities, which currently exist in an area where the Futenma alternative facility's airfield will be laid down. These on-base billets and facilities will be removed for the newly planned airfield. New billets and some other new facilities are already under construction in a different area of the camp. Going ahead of the environmental assessment procedures, the government is steadily pushing for the construction of an alternative base at Henoko.

(7) Interview with former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on chaotic political situation - Lower House must be dissolved immediately after supplementary budget clears the Diet

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
April 30, 2009

-- When do you think the House of Representatives will be dissolved for a snap general election?

"I think Prime Minister Aso will exercise his right to dissolve the Lower House once the fiscal 2009 supplementary budget clears the Diet. The prime minister must make a decision, declaring, 'I am going to seek a mandate from the public on such and such a cause.' In that perspective, having an election after the Lower House members serve out their term is not good. It would be good to dissolve the lower chamber immediately after the supplementary budget passes through the Diet."

-- Even if the extra budget wins Diet approval, tax-related bills

may not clear the Diet.

"There are only three areas that are connected with tax reform. Once the supplementary budget passes the Diet, the government can implement a large portion of the state budget. I think we can get the related bills pass the Diet during the special session (after the election) by taking advantage of our victory.

-- The New Komeito wants to avoid the time around the July 12 Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election.

"The Tokyo election is important, but it's a local election. The Lower House election can said to be an election that will determine Japan's fate. Prime Minister Aso should make a decision on a different level. Consideration must be given to the view of the coalition partner, but the prime minister should determine the time based on the logic that we cannot entrust the Democratic Party of Japan with the reins of government."

-- What are the campaign pledges the Liberal Democratic Party should put up for the Lower House election?

"We should highlight the point that our party is the only party that can implement the needed economic stimulus measures without fail. Our party should also come up with policies to fit the conservative administration we are. I also want to see a public pledge to alter the government's constitutional interpretation concerning the right to collective self-defense, which was pursued by the Abe cabinet. Further, I want our party to continue making preparations steadily for constitutional amendment."

-- The government is scheduled to produce in June the Basic Policies for Economic and Fiscal Reform 2009. Prime Minister Aso is expected to revise in this year's Basic Policies the direction shown in the Basic Policies for Economic and Fiscal Management and Structural Reform 2006, produced by the former Koizumi cabinet.

"The Basic Policies 2006 will remain as the basis. It is necessary to address a crisis, but the view that the Basic Policies 2006 was a fundamental mistake is wrong. The stance of proceeding with structural reform must not be changed."

-- You visited the United States from April 14 and delivered to the U.S. side Prime Minister Aso's letter to President Barack Obama. What was your achievement there?

"In the meeting with Vice President Joe Biden, I told him, 'If the United States ratifies the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), it would be a large step toward nuclear disarmament.' I also told him that disarmament should be pushed ahead in a way that includes not only the United States and Russia but also China."

(Interviewed by Hiroshi Oyama)

(8) LDP Secretary General Hosoda: If Diet session is extended, Lower House will be dissolved in summer or later

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
April 30, 2009

Naoki Tomie

There are only four months to go before the terms of the House of Representatives members expire. The newspaper asked leaders of political parties about their parties' strategies for the next House of Representatives election.

-- Deliberations on the supplementary budget for fiscal 2009 have begun. Do you think the Lower House will not be dissolved before the extra budget clears the Diet?

Hirozuki Hosoda: We must pass the budget even if it takes a lot of time. The opposition says that the scale of the budget is too large and its contents are not good. However, there is an option of seeking a vote of national confidence at the end. I think the budget should be implemented as quickly as possible, after enacting it as early as possible. Differences between the ruling and opposition camps should be deliberated at the Diet in the future. After doing so, assessment of the budget should be sought in the next Lower House election. Well-paced discussions should be held.

-- Do you think if the opposition bloc drags out deliberations, Prime Minister Taro Aso will dissolve the Lower House?

Hosoda: That path is easy but is the worst option. The reason is because the implementation of (economic stimulus measures) would be delayed. The opposition should immediately oppose it (if do so).

-- Do you think the environment for Lower House dissolution will be created if the extra budget clears the Diet, but the related bills do not?

Hosoda: That's a minimum condition. Hopefully, both the budget and related bills will be passed. The ruling coalition bears that responsibility.

-- Is there any possibility that the passage of the related bills will slip to mid-June or after?

Hosoda: That's a possibility. Therefore, I want the opposition to cooperate (on Diet management) to pass (related bills) before the end of May, even if they oppose. If so, there will be nothing to do (at the Diet). Then, there is a possibility that the prime minister will consider dissolving the Lower House. If (related bills) are passed in late June, we might miss the timing of dissolution. If that is the case, the general election will be held in the summer or the fall.

-- Many LDP members think that it is a disadvantage for the LDP to hold the snap election sometime close to the expiration of the terms of the Lower House members.

Hosoda: There was a situation in the past in which we were caught in a dilemma, but there are other cases as well. So, that view has little basis.

-- What points are important in considering the timing of dissolution?

Hosoda: If the opposition camp opposes a bill revising the National Pension Law, the bill's passage will be delayed to mid-June. The current argument is whether the bills (including the extra budget) will be enacted in June or after. If the term of the current Diet session (June 3) is extended, the voting date (of the Lower House

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election) will actually become sometime between late August and September. In order to hold the general election in July, deliberations will have to be discontinued.

-- Do you think consideration should be given to the New Komeito, which does not want to the general election and the (July 10) Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election to be held closer together?

Hosoda: I can't say that Lower House dissolution and snap election will be restricted because the Tokyo election will be held. Priority should be give to national politics.

-- Don't you exclude the possibility that the election will be called before the Group of Eight summit and the Tokyo assembly election?

Hosoda: I do not. Anything is possible.

-- What are the campaign issues?

Hosoda: I want the public to highly value the Aso administration's large scale economic measures and international activities.

-- How will the LDP handle calls for restricting hereditary Diet seats?

Hosoda: We will discuss the matter right away. I think those critical of (the hereditary-seat system of passing down Diet seats to descendants) have called for advertising candidates and making a new rule for selecting the party's candidates. That is a matter of course.

-- Will the LDP include regulations on the hereditary-seat system in its manifesto (set of campaign pledges) for the next Lower House election?

Hosoda: I don't know. It's too early to talk about a manifesto. LDP members will waver if debate is begun, sensing that the election will occur soon. If so, the Diet will not be able to hold deliberations. What is needed now is to pass the extra budget and implement the economic stimulus package so that our country will be able to overcome the economic recession.

(9) Interview with DPJ Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama on 2009 Lower House election -- DPJ bears greater public expectations than LDP does

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
May 1, 2009

-- Is it possible for your party to take the helm of government through the next House of Representatives election under President Ichiro Ozawa?

"I want to see President Ozawa do his best. I want him to convey his feelings frankly to ordinary citizens in places like a town hall meeting. I believe we can achieve our goal if we can set the stage where people can say, 'We are happy because we trusted President Ozawa.' If we avoid that point, we won't be able to move forward."

-- There are many in the party who are hoping for his resignation as party head.

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"Discord among party members would negatively affect the party. There is an ample possibility that he will get through if he does his utmost and everyone watches him with expectation."

-- Some are still hoping that you will put an end to the question of whether or not Mr. Ozawa should resign.

"If and when a decision is made that we will not be able to take power despite our strong unity and support for him, I will convince him to step down even if that costs me my post. For now, it is important to lead him so that he can take action to the best of his ability."

-- Mr. Ozawa's resignation might result in schisms in the party.

"Our party will not split up under any circumstances. President Ozawa told me that he will do his best to take over the reins of government even if he becomes an ordinary foot soldier. Believing in his words, we can face the next House of Representatives election no matter who takes the presidency."

-- What's the deadline for resolving the question of Mr. Ozawa's resignation?

"Whether or not we can take power can be determined even at the last moment. It might be necessary to observe the situation until immediately before the Lower House election. Public expectations on our party are still greater than those on the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). In either case, we can set the stage for a change of government."

-- President Ozawa's secretary has been indicted over corporate donations. How are you going to define a ban on corporate donations in your manifesto for the next Lower House election?

"The LDP cannot jump at this theme because it is soaked in corporate donations. I believe if we show that our difference with the LDP lies here, we can get a positive national assessment. We want to incorporate into our manifesto (a ban on corporate donations and) restrictions on hereditary seats as a package."

-- President Ozawa said that it is acceptable to ban corporate donations immediately.

"Such is possible for politicians with a certain level of financial means. But because one cannot become a politician without money, it might end up lacking in fairness. By setting tax breaks on individual donations, it must be shifted to individual donations at the earliest possible time. There is an idea of prohibiting (corporate donations) within four years, the Lower House members' term."

--- What is the motive behind your plan to restrict the hereditary seats in the Diet?"

"Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who was nationally popular, has fallen into the banal idea of handing his seat to his second son. That must be exposed clearly. Past prime ministers since Ryutaro Hashimoto lacked gutsiness because they are all hereditary lawmakers. We want to call on the lawmakers to practice self-discipline by restricting that hereditary practice."

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(Interviewed by Yoichi Takeuchi)

(10) Interview with Kozo Watanabe, DPJ supreme advisor: Ozawa being driven into making eleventh-hour decision on his course of action

MAINCHI (Page 5) (Full)
April 30, 2009

"The Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) long-term government has already come to an end." "We expect a Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government to be established through the next general election." Voices expecting a change of government had been growing until two months ago. But since a secretary to the largest opposition party president, who is to play the leading role in a change of government, unprecedentedly in postwar politics, faced a criminal investigation and was indicted, the DPJ has been in a difficult situation.

There are 14 lawmakers who had received political donations from Nishimatsu Construction Co. Two of them are DPJ members, and 11 are LDP members. I also wonder why prosecutors have singled out only the DPJ president among them, as others have questions about their conduct. Equality under law is an ironclad rule. Even so, one should not say that others also acted unlawfully. I feel sorry for Mr. Ichiro Ozawa because he has been told to fulfill his responsibility to give a full explanation. This suggestion is to demand that he should deliver speeches across the nation, but what he hates most is to deliver a speech. When he used to be an LDP member, he had often asked me to give a speech instead of him.

If I am asked about whether the party would be able to win the next election under President Ozawa, I will reply, as many others say, that it will be difficult. Mr. Ozawa said earlier: "I am innocent. But I will make a decision on what I should do in the future, focusing on whether the party can win the next election." Hearing this remark, I thought he will very soon make a fine judgment that will go down in history. But the time limit is about to expire.

Party members remain silent about Mr. Ozawa's course of action, incurring public criticism. The responsibility for this also rests with me, because I constantly said: "Mr. Ozawa is a man who can make a wise judgment, so it would be better for us not to suggest to him this or that." That is why mid-ranking office officials have

refrained from making any comment.

I think that if Mr. had made the decision (to step down) on March 24 (when his secretary was indicted), he would have become a national hero. In any society, there are persons who flatter persons in power. He might be delaying (the decision) (following advice by such persons). Even Toyotomi Hideyoshi, a Sengoku period daimyo (1536-1598) who unified the nation, mistakenly decided to send troops to Korea in response to advice by flatters, though this option was apparently wrong. Influential persons tend to shun those who express their honest views and bring apple-polishers closer to them. A person who acts on public opinion will prosper, while a person who goes against public opinion will lose out. This is a principle applied to political parties and politicians in democratic society.

In a state of emergency, it will be possible for the party to pick a new president even tomorrow. In the DPJ, there are more than 10

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members who are more respectable than Mr. (Taro) Aso, for instance, (Yukio) Hatoyama, (Naoto) Kan, and (Katsuya) Okada. They have credentials to be a good prime minister. There is no possibility at all that the party will split as a result of Mr. Ozawa being driven into a corner.

The contents of the supplementary budget bill for fiscal 2009 show that the LDP has already become an irresponsible political party. Some experts say that it would be difficult to attain the estimated amount of 46 trillion in tax revenues because of the current economic slump. Despite such a severe situation, the government has proposed 102 trillion yen in spending in the budget. National finances will surely crumble if the situation is left as is.

Mr. Aso should have carried out a general election last November. Delaying the election, he has given priority only to an election strategy and has opted for a pork-barrel policy. Should the current situation continue much longer, Japan will go bankrupt.

(Corrected copy): Think of statesmen making laws: Seiji Maehara and Guam relocation agreement

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 28, 2009

Seiji Maehara, a vice president of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), 46, had lunch with Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Mitchell (Derek) on April 16 at a Spanish restaurant near the Department of Defense in Washington. Mitchell then asked Maehara about his party's policy toward the U.S. The DPJ had opposed the agreement on the relocation of U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam. Maehara said:

"We will cooperate on the U.S. force realignment in Japan, but our party will discuss individual issues while maintaining the relationship of trust."

Maehara told Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and other U.S. officials: "Japan-U.S. relations are the linchpin of Japanese diplomacy." Maehara, who is regarded as a right-wing politician of the party, was quick to oppose the Guam relocation agreement, which stipulates Japan's share of up to 2.8 billion dollars.

Maehara happened to find the book titled International Politics written by then Kyoto University Prof. Masataka Kosaka, while he was preparing for an entrance examination, after having failed in an exam the previous year. The book paved the way for him to foreign and security affairs. He entered Kyoto University without hesitation. He studied under Prof. Kosaka, a conservative opinion leader, who made the basis for the reevaluation of former Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida. He once thought of becoming a scholar. However, he was told by Kosaka that he was not smart enough to become a scholar. He, therefore, joined the Matsushita Institute of Government and Management.

He was first elected to the Diet in 1993 as a member of the Japan

New Party. In opposition to the political move involving the JNP, which was led by then Japan Renewal Party head Ichiro Ozawa, he moved to the New Party Sakigake.

At that time, Hiroyuki Sonoda, 67, extended a helping hand to Maehara. For Maehara, Sonoda is still the most reliable person among

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the ruling Liberal Democratic Party members. They sometimes come across at their favorite restaurant in the Ginza district. Sonoda said: "I want to work with you again." Maehara responded with a smile: "I would like to do so."

Maehara won the 2005 DPJ presidential election. Before that, through Kazuo Inamori, honorary chairman of KYOCERA Co., Ozawa had offered to support Maehara in the race if Maehara would give Ozawa the post of secretary general. But Maehara flatly turned down Ozawa's offer. Since then, it is said that there has been a wide gulf between the two.

Ozawa, Maehara's successor, took a stance against the government and ruling camp and his stance had a negative impact on the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean and other issues. In the DPJ, there are moves to resolve issues by "opposing the principle," in order to avoid the confrontation between the right and left wings. However, the party will face issues it has put off if it takes the reins of government.

Political realignment advocates in the LDP, which has become perplexed at the politically divided Diet situation, name Maehara with whom they want to form a new party. Some DPJ members say Maehara can read neither the political situation nor a mood in the party.

Maehara has recently reiterated the need for "a change in government," refraining from making remarks on Ozawa's course of action (over his secretary's violation of the Political Funds Control Law). He did not give his word to former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and other politicians, with whom he visited the United States.

He says: "A change of government is just a means. We will have to find out what the purpose is." If he joins the ruling camp, he may have to prepare a different answer.

ZUMWALT